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IMAGE FROM ME AND MY AINIA BY RYAN

AMERICA

By Keiko Ichiguchi

Volume 1 Chapter 3

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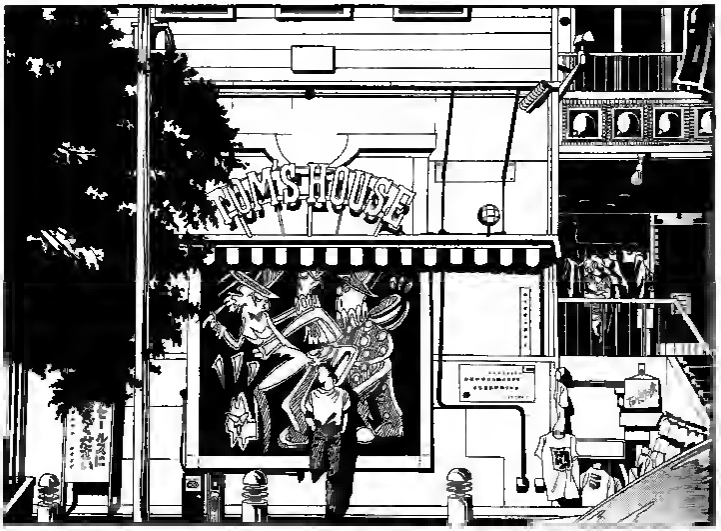
AMERICA

◖CHAPTER 3◗



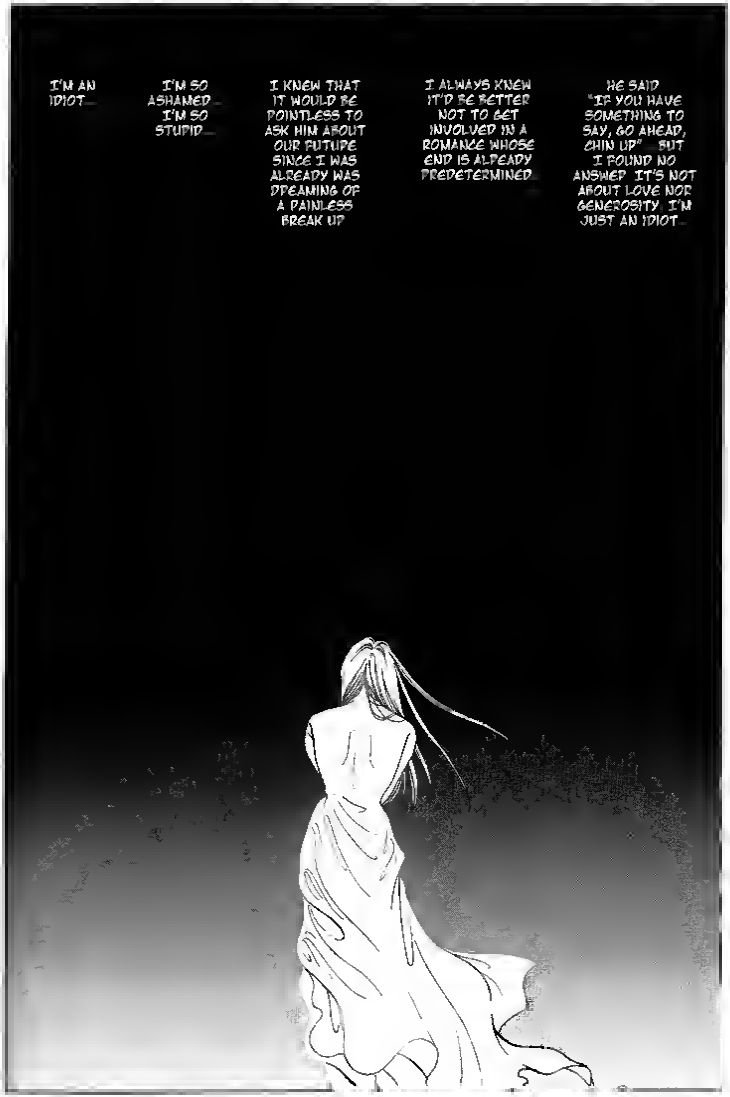
I'M AN IDIOT...

I'M SO ASHAMED... I'M SO STUPID...

I KNEW THAT IT WOULD BE POINTLESS TO ASK HIM ABOUT OUR FUTURE SINCE I WAS ALREADY WAS DREAMING OF A PAINLESS BREAK UP

I ALWAYS KNEW IT'D BE BETTER NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN A ROMANCE WHOSE END IS ALREADY PREDETERMINED...

HE SAID "IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, GO AHEAD, CHIN UP" BUT I FOUND NO ANSWER IT'S NOT ABOUT LOVE NOR GENEROSITY I'M JUST AN IDIOT...



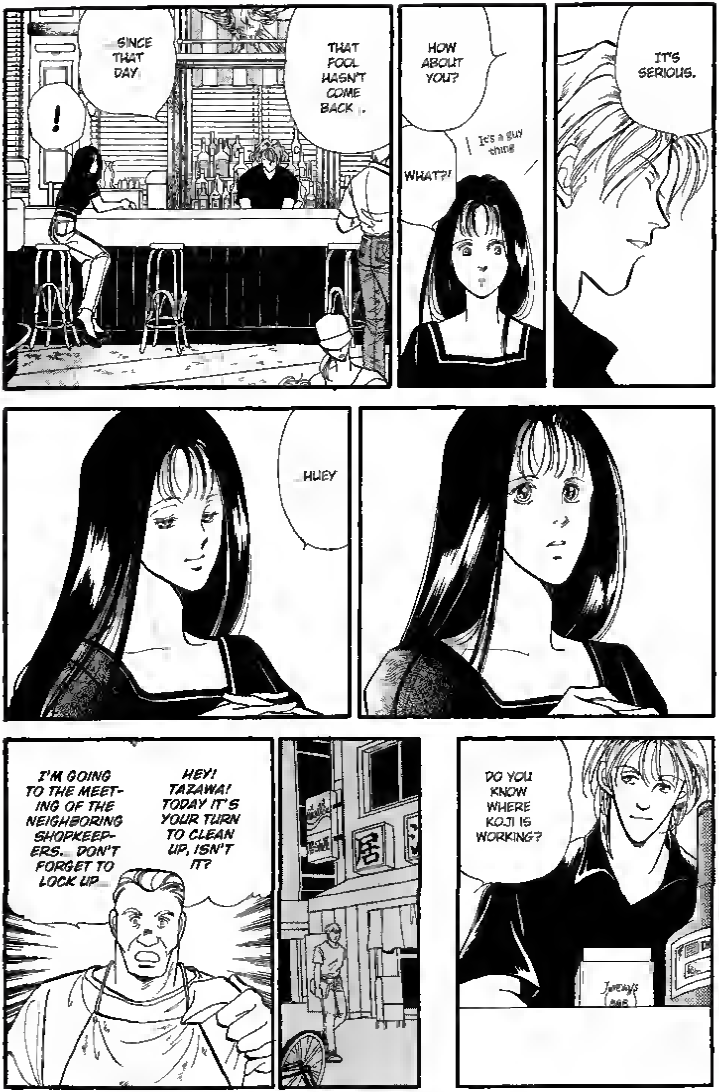
Chirp
Chirp
Chirp
I STILL ASKED IN VAIN FOR SOMETHING I COULDN'T HAVE...
PHEW!
I LIVED LIKE A WEAK AND FRAGILE HEROINE...
...OF A TRAGEDY...
...BY BEHAVING LIKE A GIRL WHO CAN'T STAND ON HER OWN WITHOUT LEANING ON SOMEBODY...
NAE!!!
LEANING ON SOMEBODY...
...WHAT HEAT...

.. OVER THERE
ARE YOU THE BARTENDER TODAY, JEREMY?
HUEY WON'T ARRIVE UNTIL 5 O'CLOCK AND NAOYUKI IS...
HELLO..
HELLO, NAE! IT'S REALLY HOT TODAY, ISN'T IT?
Jeremy BAR
THERE ARE GUYS FROM A RECORD LABEL HERE
I WONDER WHY...
HMM. BUT HE DOESN'T LOOK VERY HAPPY.
GREAT!
HE DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO AUDITION...
WHAT?!
THAT'S STRANGE.
WHAT ARE THE GUYS FROM THE RECORD LABEL DOING HERE?
TAKAKO...

YOU THINK YOU'LL BECOME A STAR THANKS TO YOUR PRETTY LITTLE FACE?
YES, SEE YOU SOON.
THEN WE'LL BE WAITING FOR YOUR ANSWER.
!
TAKA-KO...
WAIT, TAKAKO!
I WON'T WAIT
JEREMY, HUEY SHOULD ARRIVE SOON, RIGHT?
I'M TAKING A BREAK, OKAY? SEE YOU LATER!
NAO-YUKI...
SLAM
I got it
LISTEN, TAKAKO
NO PROBLEM
JEREMY, MAY I LEAVE THE GUESTS FROM MY UNIVERSITY'S PARTY IN YOUR HANDS?
THANKS. SEE YOU SOON, NAE. BYE.

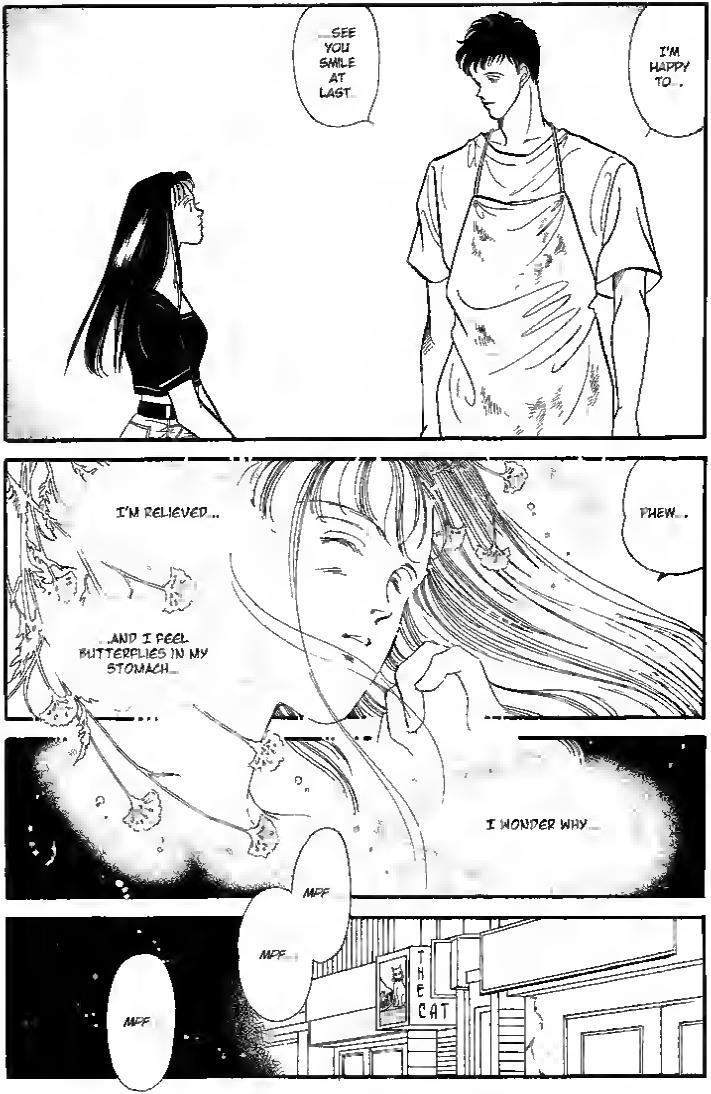
GRAB
WAIT!
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T PARTICIPATE IN THE AUDITION .
AND I APOLOGIZE FOR TRYING TO KISS YOU THE OTHER DAY—
BUT I'M CRAZY ABOUT YOU—
I'M YOUNGER THAN YOU AND I MAY HAVE NO TALENT— AND I MAY EVEN BE A COWARD,
.. BUT I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU, TAKAKO!
NO!!!
I'M SERIOUS! ARE YOU LISTENING TO ME OR WHAT?! I—.

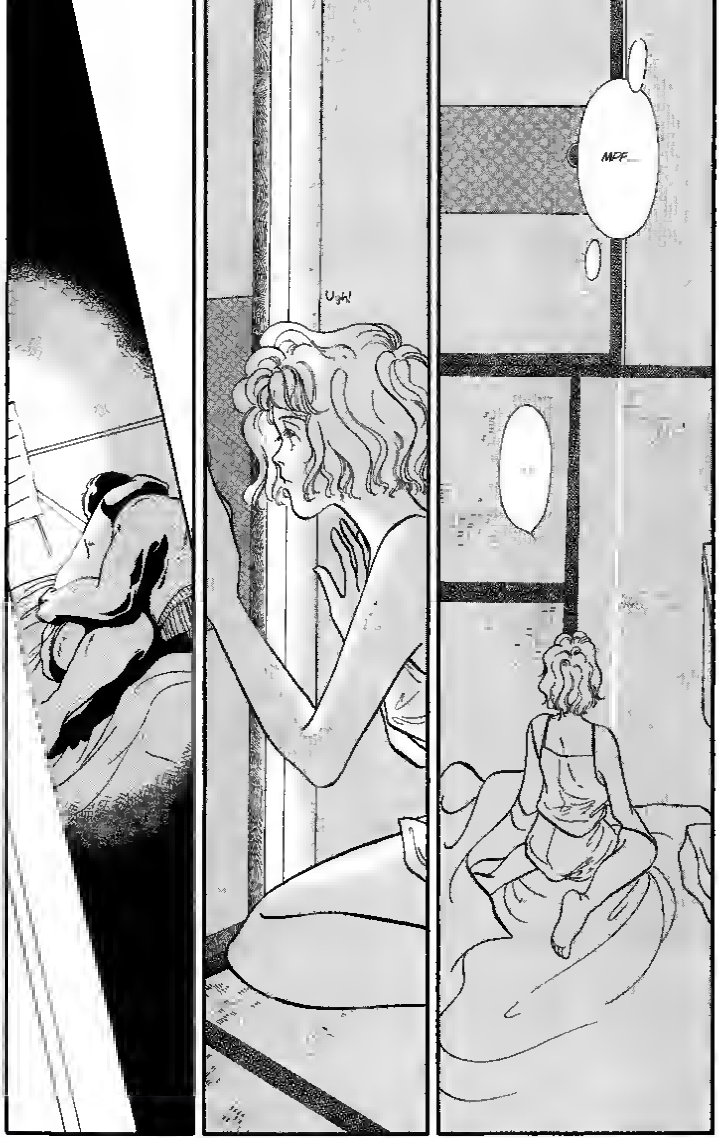
TAKAKO?
WHY DO YOU HATE ME?
LEAVE ME ALONE...
...YOU'RE OUT OF LINE...
NAO-YUKI WENT AFTER TAKA-KO?
OH...
SO...
HE HAS GUTS, IT'S NEVER TOO LATE...
WERE YOU AWARE THAT NAOYUKI WAS IN LOVE WITH TAKAKO?
OF COURSE! I'M AMAZED THAT YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED ANYTHING...


SINCE THAT DAY...
!
THAT FOOL HASN'T COME BACK...
HOW ABOUT YOU?
It's a guy thing
WHAT?!
IT'S SERIOUS.
HUEY
I'M GOING TO THE MEETING OF THE NEIGHBORING SHOPKEEPERS. DON'T FORGET TO LOCK UP...
HEY! TAZAWA! TODAY IT'S YOUR TURN TO CLEAN UP, ISN'T IT?
DO YOU KNOW WHERE KOJI IS WORKING?

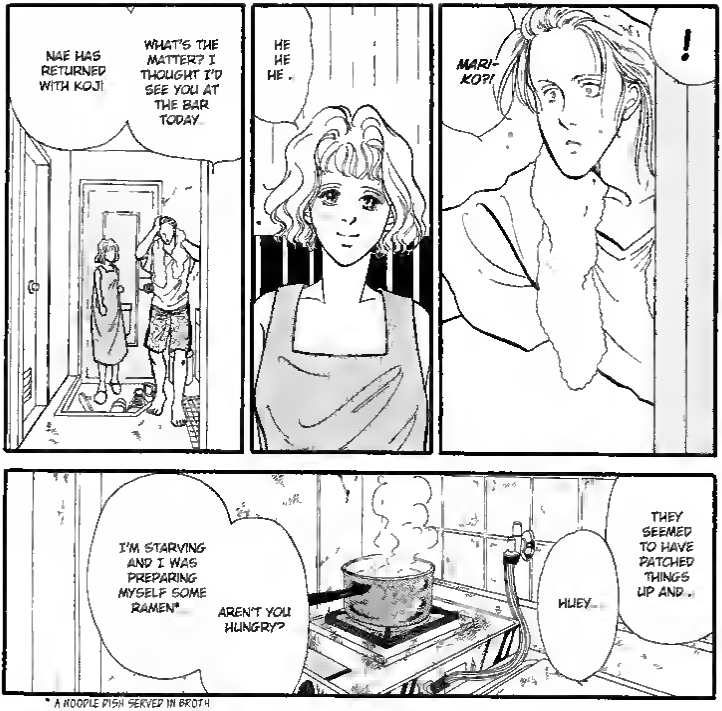
AND WHILE SHE WAS CRYING FOR THAT MAN...
SHE WAS CRYING.
CLACK
CLACK
Did you hear me?
. THE DOORS AND WINDOWS .
...WHAT DID I DO?!
THE BOSS LET ME IN. .
BA-THUMP!
EXCUSE ME .

...I'M ASKING YOUR FORGIVENESS FOR HAVING FORCED YOU TO ACCOMPANY ME TO THE EXHIBITION...
!
I WENT TO JEREMY'S PLACE BUT IT SEEMS THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HANGING AROUND THERE ANYMORE LATELY.
SO .
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T MEAN TO SCARE YOU!
MY... HEART!
BA-THUMP
BA-THUMP
BA-THUMP
AND YOU, TAZAWA. HOW ARE YOU?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT... BUT YOU, HOW ARE YOU?
I JUST WANTED TO APOLOGIZE...
NO PROBLEM... I...
WHAT IS IT?
I GET IT! I'LL CLOSE UP EVERYTHING!
YES! YES! YES!
Ah, I too when I was young
I WANTED TO TELL YOU TO SHUT THE DOOR, AND...
giggle
giggle
How annoying...

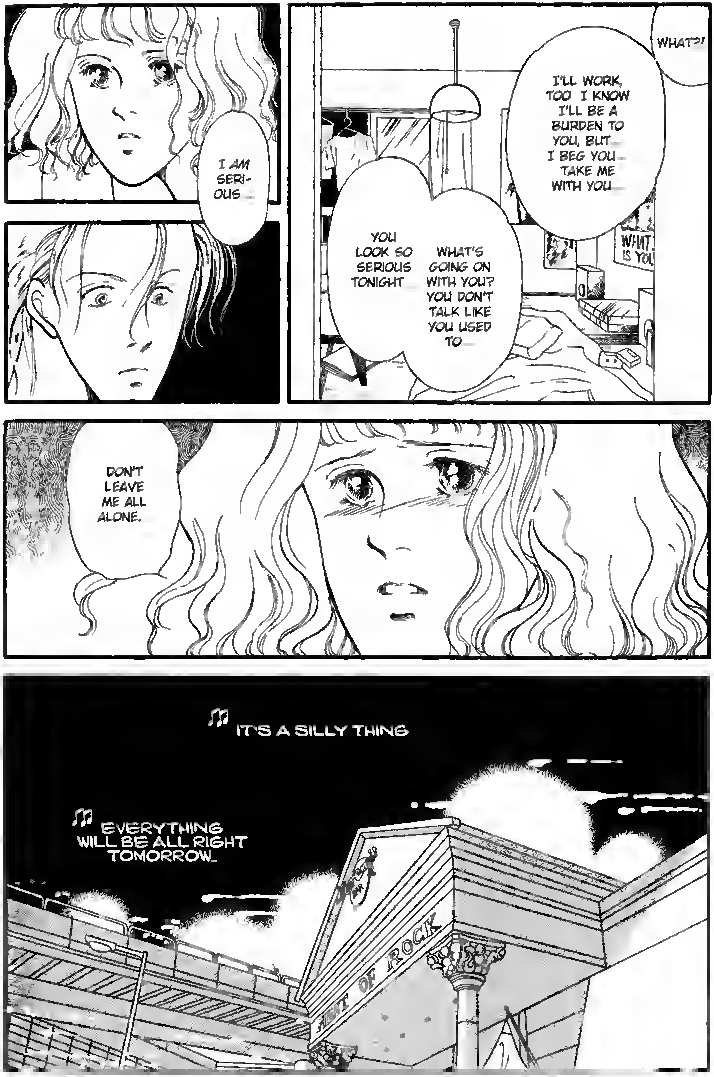

...SEE YOU SMILE AT LAST...
I'M HAPPY TO...
I'M RELIEVED...
...AND I FEEL BUTTERFLIES IN MY STOMACH...
PHEW...
I WONDER WHY...
MEE
MEE
MEE
THE CAT


MCF...
Ugh!

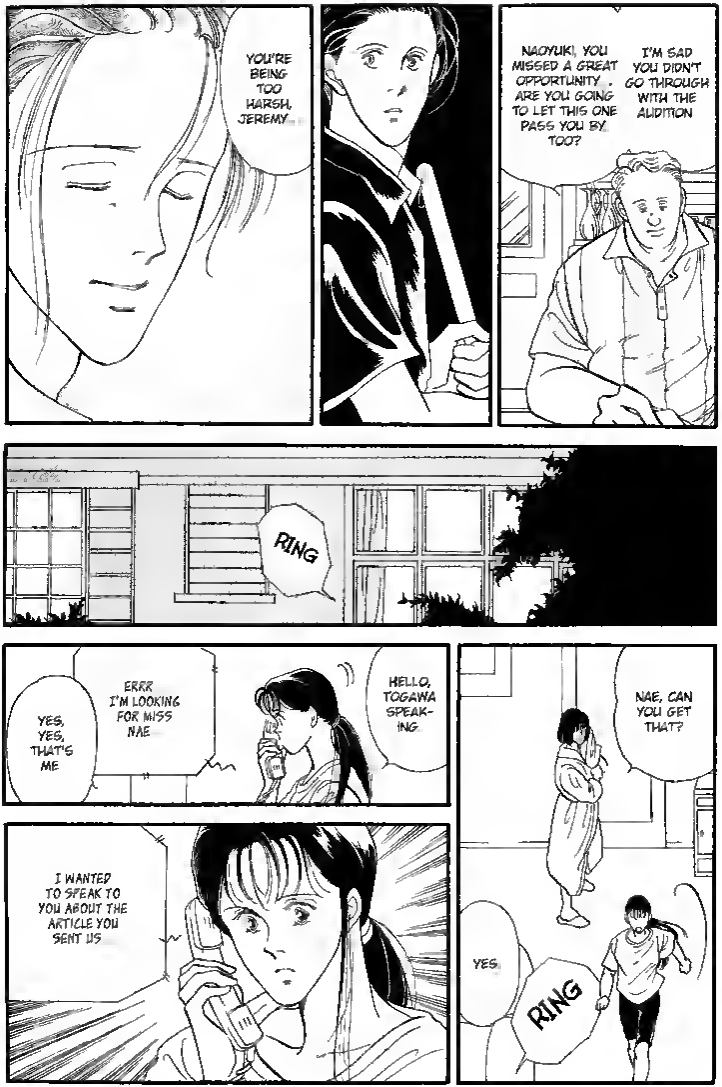
MARIKO? ARE YOU COMING, TOO?
BANG
BANG
BANG
BANG
YES!
WHO ARE YOU? DO YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?!

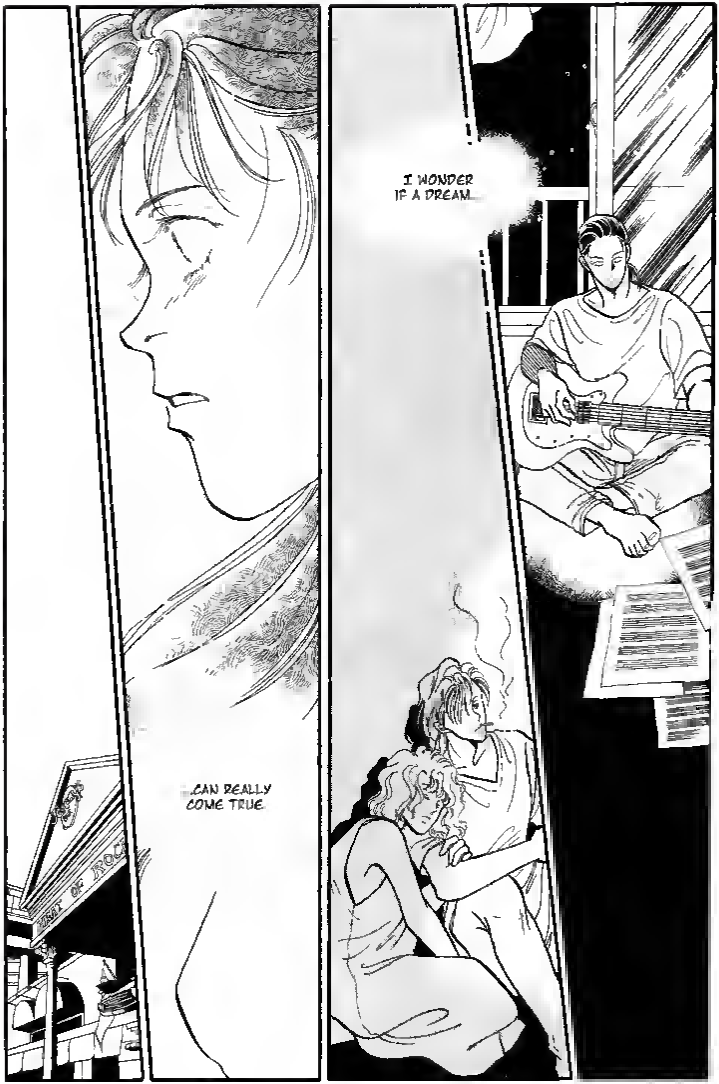

NAE HAS RETURNED WITH KOJI
WHAT'S THE MATTER? I THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU AT THE BAR TODAY
HE HE HE.
MARI-KO?!
!
I'M STARVING AND I WAS PREPARING MYSELF SOME RAMEN*
AREN'T YOU HUNGRY?
HUEY...
THEY SEEMED TO HAVE PATCHED THINGS UP AND.
* A NOODLE DISH SERVED IN BROTH
WHAT? WHAT'S UP?

WHEN ARE YOU LEAVING FOR AMERICA?
WHY'RE YOU ASKING ME THAT NOW?
WHEN I HAVE ENOUGH MONEY, I GUESS.
CAN I GO WITH YOU?
WHERE TO IN AMERICA?
TO THE WEST... I WAS TOLD THAT MY MOTHER LIVES ON THE WEST COAST.
IN A HOSPI-TAL?
YES IT'S A BEAUTIFUL PLACE FOR TREATMENT.
IT'S NICE AND THE AIR IS PURE...

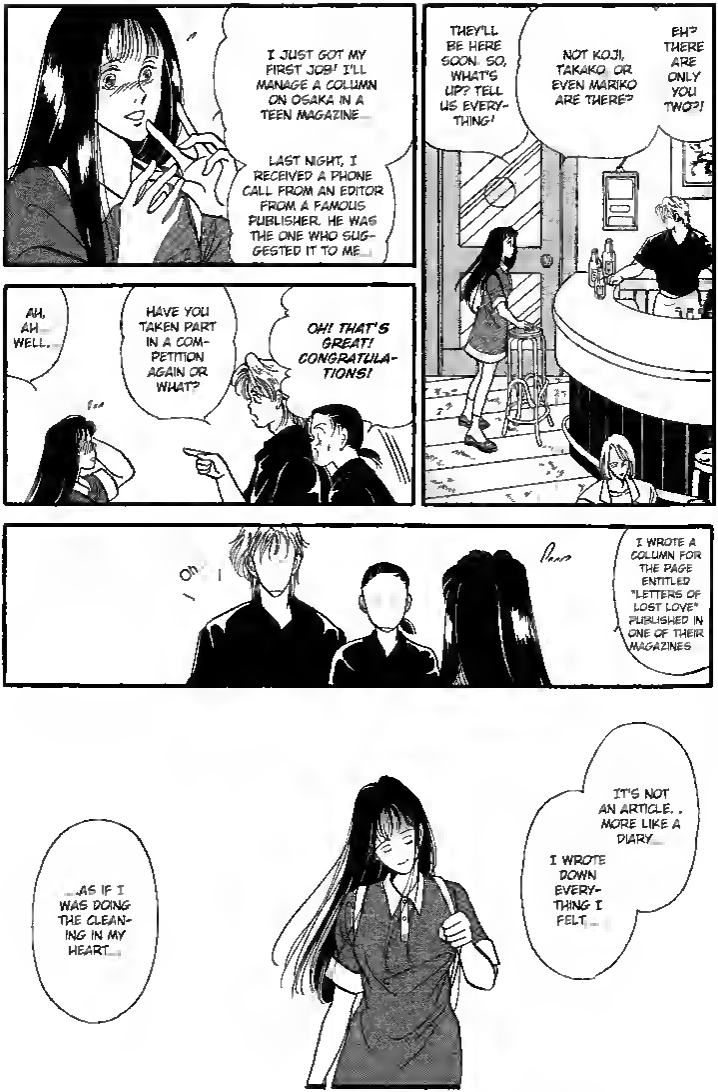

I AM SERI-OUS...
YOU LOOK SO SERIOUS TONIGHT...
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU? YOU DON'T TALK LIKE YOU USED TO...
I'LL WORK, TOO I KNOW I'LL BE A BURDEN TO YOU, BUT... I BEG YOU... TAKE ME WITH YOU...
WHAT?!
DON'T LEAVE ME ALL ALONE.
♫ IT'S A SILLY THING
♫ EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT TOMORROW...
ROCK

THEY DIDN'T COME FOR MY TALENT AS A GUITARIST...
THIS IS SUCH A GOOD OPPORTUNITY... GO FOR IT!
NAOYUKI, WHY ARE YOU SO WORRIED?
TAKAKO WAS RIGHT.
DO YOU LAUGH AT ME...
I DON'T LIKE THAT SONG CHANGE IT, JEREMY...
I BELIEVE YET THAT
...MY DREAM WILL COME TRUE
EVERYTHING!
WHAT'S WRONG?
You'll be a star!
You're a rather good looking fellow
YOU KNOW BEAUTY TOO, IS IMPORTANT FOR MUSICIANS
YOU SEEM TO DESPISE MODELS
AFTERWARDS, IT'S UP TO YOU TO GET BY, NAOYUKI!
WHY IS THAT? BEAUTY IS ALSO A TALENT. WHAT MATTERS IS FOR YOU TO ENTER THE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD.
THAT BEING SAID...


YOU'RE BEING TOO HARSH, JEREMY...
NAOYUKI, YOU MISSED A GREAT OPPORTUNITY. ARE YOU GOING TO LET THIS ONE PASS YOU BY, TOO?
I'M SAD YOU DIDN'T GO THROUGH WITH THE AUDITION
RING
YES, YES, THAT'S ME
ERRR I'M LOOKING FOR MISS NAE
HELLO, TOGAWA SPEAKING
NAE, CAN YOU GET THAT?
I WANTED TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE ARTICLE YOU SENT US
YES
RING


I WONDER
IF A DREAM
CAN REALLY
COME TRUE

PICKS UP
IT'S ONLY THAT MARIKO SEEMS WEIRD...
WEIRD?
WANNA FIGHT?
SHE'S ALWAYS BEEN WEIRD...
ERR... NOTHING, NOTHING...
WHAT'S THE MATTER, HUEY? WHY ARE YOU SO ABSENT-MINDED?
CRASH
OH...
SO YOU'RE REALLY WORRIED ABOUT MARIKO?
AND HERE I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE OF THE TWO OF YOU TO BE IN LOVE...
USUALLY SHE'S ONLY DUMB BUT TODAY SHE TURNED SERIOUS ALL OF A SUDDEN...
...AND I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO HER...
LISTEN, EVERYBODY!
SLAM


I JUST GOT MY FIRST JOB! I'LL MANAGE A COLUMN ON OSAKA IN A TEEN MAGAZINE...
LAST NIGHT, I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM AN EDITOR FROM A FAMOUS PUBLISHER. HE WAS THE ONE WHO SUGGESTED IT TO ME...
EH? THERE ARE ONLY YOU TWO?!
NOT KOJI, TAKAKO OR EVEN MARIKO ARE THERE?
THEY'LL BE HERE SOON. SO, WHAT'S UP? TELL US EVERYTHING!
OH! THAT'S GREAT! CONGRATULATIONS!
HAVE YOU TAKEN PART IN A COMPETITION AGAIN OR WHAT?
AH, AH... WELL...
I WROTE A COLUMN FOR THE PAGE ENTITLED "LETTERS OF LOST LOVE" PUBLISHED IN ONE OF THEIR MAGAZINES
OH!
IT'S NOT AN ARTICLE... MORE LIKE A DIARY...
I WROTE DOWN EVERYTHING I FELT...
...AS IF I WAS DOING THE CLEANING IN MY HEART...

HE HE! IT'S MY FIRST STEP TOWARDS MY FUTURE DREAM OF BEING A JOURNALIST
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW YOU DID IT. IT'S THE END RESULT THAT COUNTS.
LISTEN, I...
...
BUT. . YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BECOME A STAR!
THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL ONLY BECAUSE OF YOUR GOOD LOOKS!
YES... BUT I HOLD MY FUTURE IN MY HANDS...
...I'M GOING TO TOKYO.
WHAT?!
IN TOKYO, MAYBE...
ONCE I ENTER THE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD, I MIGHT FIND SOMEONE INTERESTED IN ME FOR MY TALENT AS A GUITARIST...
I'M A COWARD... IF I DON'T PULL MYSELF TOGETHER NOW, I WILL BECOME AN OLD MAN WITHOUT HAVING FULFILLED MY DREAMS. I CAN'T SPEND MY TIME WORKING HERE, HAVING FUN WITH YOU...
THEREFORE...

ARE YOU SERIOUS?
YES
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TAKAKO THINKS ABOUT IT...
I SEE.
IT'S STRANGE... WE'RE SO LAID-BACK, AND YET...
WE'RE ABOUT TO REALIZE OUR DREAMS...
...MAYBE BECAUSE THEY'VE ALREADY TURNED INTO REALITY...

I HAVE NO CLUE.
BUT YOU *WERE* THE LAST ONE TO LEAVE THE RESTAURANT LAST NIGHT. WERE'NT YOU?
YES.
DID YOU LOCK THE DOOR?
YES, AROUND NINE O'CLOCK
AFTER WHICH...
YESTERDAY'S PROFITS WERE STOLEN...
AM I A SUS-PECT?
BOSS?
SO WHEN YOU LEFT YOU DIDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING WEIRD? A STRANGER...?
IT'S AN INFORMAL INVESTIGATION. NOBODY IS ACCUSING YOU

NOWADAYS, IT'S EXPENSIVE TO GO OUT WITH YOUR GIRLFRIEND...
YES, BUT SHE...
THERE'S ONE GIRL WHO CAME BY
NO-BODY...
WHAT ARE YOU IMPLYING?
CONSIDERING THE CIRCUM-STANCES, I CHANGED MY MIND...
BECAUSE YOU TRUSTED ME, RIGHT?
IF YOU BELIEVE THAT, WHY'D YOU ASK ME TO LOCK THE DOOR?
MEN SOME-TIMES HAVE STUPID IDEAS...
HOW WOULD I STEAL YOUR DOUGH?
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THE SAFE WAS!
CROOK! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!

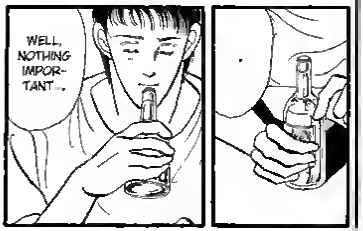
THE FACT REMAINS THAT UNTIL WE HAVE FOUND THE CULPRIT, YOU'D BETTER NOT COME BACK TO WORK ANYMORE...
!
NO! UNHAND ME!
MARIKO?
!
HEY! YOU! WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

I...!
KOJI...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MARIKO?
WHAT DID HE DO TO YOU?
HEY?! MARIKO?!
NOTHING HE HE... EVERY-THING IS FINE...
YOU DON'T LOOK WELL. WHO WAS THAT? YOUR FATHER?
I DON'T HAVE A FATHER.
AH! I'M SORRY...
HE'S ONE OF THE CLIENTS AT MY MOTHER'S BAR. HE'S ALWAYS DRUNK AND BOTHERS ME ALL OF THE TIME... I DON'T LIKE HIM.
A BAR?
YES, SHE RUNS A ROTTEN BAR. I HAVE TO GO, KOJI. SEE YOU SOON
HEY! CAN I WALK YOU HOME?
DON'T WORRY.
BYE!

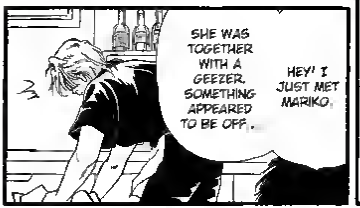
I WANT TO HAVE A WORD WITH YOU...
HI, KOJI!
HI!
AH! KOJI, I WAS ABOUT TO CLOSE.
BAR
I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOU
T SHIRTS
I went to the bath room!!
WERE YOU WAITING FOR ME UP UNTIL NOW?
You were here?
NAE?!
I ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO TELL YOU SOMETHING
NAOYUKI HAS DECIDED TO GO TO TOKYO. DID YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?
REALLY?
YES, WE'RE GETTING CLOSER TO OUR DREAM!
AH.
I GOT MY FIRST JOB! I'M GOING TO RUN A COLUMN IN A MAGAZINE!
I'M SO GLAD!

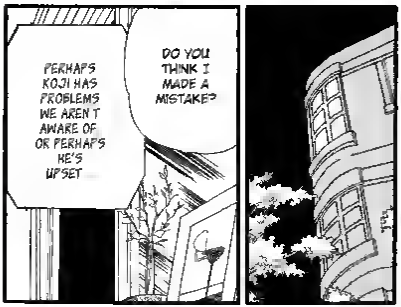
I THOUGHT YOU WERE HAPPY FOR ME!
AND THAT'S ALL?!
I HAD BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR A REALLY LONG TIME
CONGRATULATIONS...
AND I SWEAR TO YOU THAT I'M HAPPY FOR YOU.
I UNDERSTAND.
ARE YOU LISTENING, KOJI?
Creak
BANG
WELL, I'M LEAVING.
MMH... MAYBE I CHOSE THE WRONG TIME... SORRY.

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
He seems out of sorts


WELL, NOTHING IMPOR-TANT...

YOU LOOK ABSENT-MINDED


SHE WAS TOGETHER WITH A GEEZER. SOMETHING APPEARED TO BE OFF.
HEY! I JUST MET MARIKO.


PERHAPS KOJI HAS PROBLEMS WE AREN'T AWARE OF OR PERHAPS HE'S UPSET...
DO YOU THINK I MADE A MISTAKE?

WHERE'D YOU SEE THEM?

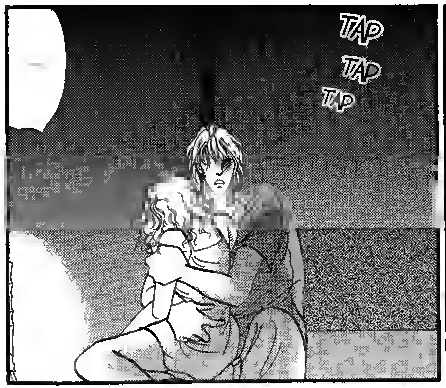
BY THE WAY DID YOU KNOW THAT NAOYUKI HAS DECIDED TO GO TO TOKYO?
TAKAKO...?
ASIDE FROM THAT, I WANTED TO CONGRATULATE YOU
BRAVO!
THANKS.
I HAD NO IDEA
HE VALUES YOUR OPINION A LOT, SO MAKE PEACE
PLEASE
ALL RIGHT.
I'LL SEE HIM.
BYE.

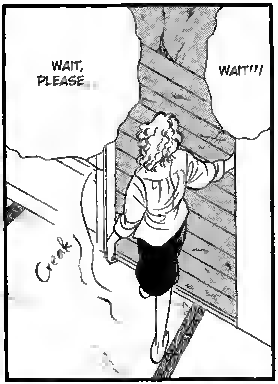
TAKAKO IS RIGHT, WE ALL HAVE OUR OWN PROBLEMS.
KOJI IS ALWAYS SO KIND... I THOUGHT HE'D BE A LOT HAPPIER FOR ME...
CLICK
I WONDER IF HE WOULD HAVE REJOICED FOR ME EVEN MORE
I'D LIKE TO SEE HIM AGAIN...
HOTEL 21

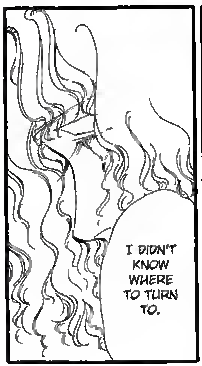
I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HER FAMILY
OPEN
CRASH
THIS IS MARIKO'S PLACE
KARAOKE
!
CLANG
ARE YOU MARIKO'S MOTHER?
AND YOU, ARE YOU ONE OF HER BOY-FRIENDS?
WHO'RE YOU? A THIEF?
GULP
MARIKO !!!
CRASH
THIS IS MY HOUSE! YOU CAN'T COME IN HERE LIKE THAT. I'M CALLING THE POLICE!
TAP
TAP
TAP
DON'T CHAT ME UP! SHE'S UP THERE, ISN'T SHE?!
PLEASE DO SO, DUMBASS!

MARI-KO!!!
WHY?
WHY ARE YOU HERE?!
MARIKO!!!
AAAAAH!!
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO YOUR OWN DAUGHTER?!
WAIT! DON'T GO!
YOU SAID I COULD JUMP HER BONES... WHO'S THIS GUY?!
WHAT'S ALL THIS BLOODY MESS?
AH...
YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO IT AGAIN! DON'T LEAVE ME!

DON'T LECTURE ME! YOU'RE ONLY ONE OF MANY BOYS... DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY GUYS SHE'S SCREWED?
SHE AND I ARE THE SAME..
HER FATHER RAN OFF WITH ANOTHER WOMAN! FOR MEN, ONLY FUCKING MATTERS. YOU ONLY WANT TO FULFILL YOUR SEXUAL FANTASIES!
WHY SHOULDN'T A WOMAN BE ALLOWED TO DO THE SAME?
IT'S BETTER TO BE HELD BY SOMEBODY THAN TO BE ALL ALONE!


TAP
TAP
TAP


WAIT, PLEASE...
WAIT!!
Creak


I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN TO.

WHY..
WHY HAVEN'T YOU LEFT THIS PLACE?!

!

I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY FATHER IS, AND SHE... EVEN IF SHE IS DESPICABLE, SHE'S MY MOTHER AFTER ALL.
I'VE KNOWN A LOT OF MEN, BUT THEIR KINDNESS NEVER LASTED...
I HAVE NO OTHER PLACE TO GO!
I DON'T LIKE THOSE MEN, BUT IF I REFUSE, SHE'LL THROW ME OUT...
YOU COULD'VE COME TO ME, FOOL!
I'M ALONE...
I DON'T WANT YOU TO LEAVE ME...
PLEASE, DON'T LEAVE ME...
I'M ALWAYS SO LONELY...
I THOUGHT THAT IF YOU'D KNOWN... YOU'D HAVE ABANDONED ME...

...
I'M TAKING YOU WITH ME... TO AMERICA...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "WE FORGET EVERYTHING"?
THE STOLEN MONEY DIDN'T AMOUNT TO MUCH ANYWAY, AND EVERYBODY MAKES MISTAKES.
I WITHDREW MY COMPLAINT... EVERYTHING IS BACK IN SYNC...
SO YOU UNMASKED THE CULPRIT!
BOSS?!
CLACK

TAZA-WA...
IT WAS IN ORDER TO BUY NEW VIDEO GAMES!
YOU OWE ME AN APOL-OGY!
IT WAS THE BOSS' SON.
!
WHEN HE FOUND OUT YOU WERE FIRED HE MUST'VE FELT GUILTY AND ADMITTED EVERYTHING!
HE'S ONLY TEN! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL ME?
ARE YOU LIS-TENING, BOSS?!
...I'LL ALLOW YOU TO WORK HERE AGAIN, LIKE BEFORE...
!
GRAB
THROW
HE ACCUSED ME WITHOUT PROOF!
AND HE BELIEVES HE'S DOING ME A FAVOR BY ALLOWING ME TO WORK HERE FOR A FEW BUCKS!

CLA...CK...
IS THAT WHAT I REALLY WANT?
WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
...TEACH.